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ABSTRACT

This handbook provides information about the Idaho Basic Skills Project as well as processes to help identify participants who will create a successful Basic Skills Team for the school. The handbook begins with a series of questions that are intended (1) to help administrators understand the project better and (2) to help them decide on the need for the project and its acceptance by the staff. Two charts follow. One helps identify likely candidates for the basic skills team. The other helps the administrator keep track of those teachers identified and their responses. A form is provided upon which to record the schedules of the members of the team. A list of the kinds of information the team members should be given is provided. Other contents include a form that team members should fill out regarding their understanding of basic skills and how teachers, administrators, and others should respond to the problem. A model memo to selected team members is also provided. (YLB)

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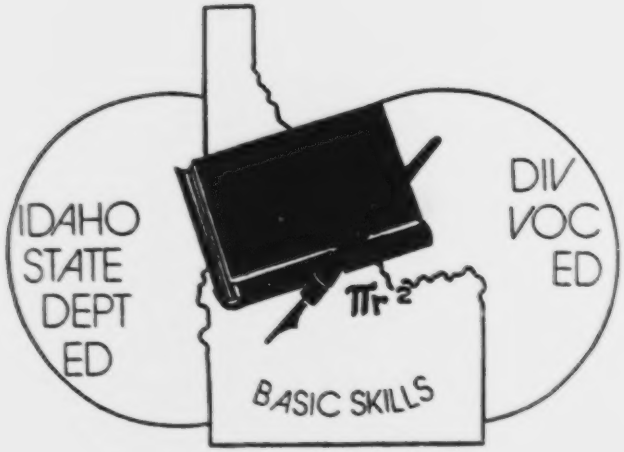
ADMINISTRATOR'S HANDBOOK



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FOR
ASSEMBLING A BASIC SKILLS TEAM
AND
STARTING A BASIC SKILLS PROJECT

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Foreword

The Idaho Basic Skills Project started in 1986 as a cooperative project between the State Department of Education and the Idaho State Division of Vocational Education in response to the need to improve students' performance in basic skills. The administration in the first phase of secondary schools involved in the Project--Lapwai, Weiser, Jerome, Boise (Hillside) and Marsh Valley--suggested that it would be helpful to future administrators to have guidance before committing to the Project. This Handbook was developed to provide information about the Project as well as processes to help identify participants who will create a successful Basic Skills Team for your school.

We are especially grateful to the Hillside Junior High School Team and their principal, Dr. Julio Bilbao, and the Weiser High School Team and their principal, Jim Reed, for reviewing these materials and offering suggestions.

Our goal is to improve students' performance in basic skills. We hope you will join us.

Elisabeth Ratcliff, Coordinator
Basic Skills Project

Dear Administrator:

Our experience with the Basic Skills Project has shown us that it is very important to gather some background information about the school climate and students' needs and then to reflect on that information. So, we have prepared a series of questions based upon experiences of administrators and team members in the first phase of the Project that will 1) help you understand the Project better and 2) help you decide on the need for, and acceptance of, the Project by your staff.

This document is for your use in planning. Answer the following questions honestly--and privately, if you'd like. Then reflect on your answers. It isn't necessary to have wildly positive answers to all the questions, but this will give you a realistic starting point. (Those questions with an asterisk are considered by Phase I Administrators to be very important.)

The forms that follow this section will help you identify potential team members.

STEP I: TESTING THE WATERS

<u>Preassessment</u>

1. Is there a consensus at your school about what is meant by basic skills? Briefly describe.

2. Is there a sense among the faculty that vocational students have not mastered the basic skills?

3. Are there classes that focus on the basic skills? (Chapter I, Special Ed, remedial, etc.)

4. Do the academic and vocational teachers have an opportunity to interact?

5.* Can you insure that the basic skills team will have at least one hour of planning time per week during school hours?

6.* Are you willing to meet at least monthly with a basic skills team to support and encourage basic skills team members?

7.* Will you commit your school to at least two year's involvement in concentrating on basic skills?

8. Can you secure board approval and support for changes needed to improve basic skills?

9.* Will team members be able to attend outside workshops or other programs during school time?

10. Is there a small ($100) contingency fund for extras as they arise?

11. Can the district pay a stipend or provide other incentives for participating in outside workshops or additional tasks?

12.* What would you expect your team to accomplish for your school?

13. Do you really want to get involved in a school-wide project? Why? Why Not?

Identifying a Basic Skills Team:

Experience has shown that enthusiastic, professional, concerned teachers and administrators working as a team can make profound changes in basic skills programs. This chart will help you identify likely candidates for your basic skills team.

Fill in any courses not printed at the top of the chart. Then write in the last name or initials of teachers who meet each criteria.

	ACADEMIC									VOCATIONAL									
	Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Science	Music & Art	Administration	Counseling			Agriculture	Bus. & Office Occ.	Health Occupations	Home Economics	Industrial Tech.	Marketing	Special Needs	Trade, Ind. & Tech.		
1. Faculty Members who have expressed interest or volunteered																			
2. Faculty Members active in professional organizations																			
3. Faculty Members with advanced degrees or special training																			
4. Faculty Members with leadership skills																			
5. Faculty Members whose schedules in and out of school will allow them to participate																			

RECRUITING YOUR BASIC SKILLS TEAM

The purpose of this chart is to help you keep track of those teachers you've identified and their responses. The following page "Assembling the Crew" will help answer questions teachers will probably ask before agreeing to sign on.

Date Contacted Yes	No	Academic Teachers	Language Arts	Mathematics	Science	Social Science	Music & Art	Administration	Counseling	Agriculture	Bus. & Office Occ.	Health Occupations	Home Economics	Industrial Tech.	Marketing	Trade, Ind. & Tech.	Special Needs
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
Yes	No	Counselors															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
Yes	No	Vocational Teachers															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															
___	___	_____															

After you've identified the members of the team, record each person's schedule on the following sheet. Team members will want to know. This will help you in planning meetings.

THE BASIC SKILLS TEAM

Basic Skills Team
Name and Subject

Period	1	2	3	Lunch	4	5	6	7

"ASSEMBLING THE CREW"

Team members will want to know:

1. What the project is about? (improving student performance of high risk in basic skills by communicating and coordinating among vocational and academic programs);

2. What the basic skills team will be doing? (meeting weekly, at least, to assess, plan, and implement strategies for communicating and coordinating; attending training sessions during school year and during summer; acting as facilitators and conduits for information and materials);

3. How much time? (at least one hour a week plus workshop times);

4. Will the basic skills team be paid for the extra time? (if the district has the resources; otherwise, it is a labor of love);

5. What are we supposed to do? (attend the meetings, share your ideas about basic skills, be open to new ideas, and follow-up on commitments made to the team).

After notifying each basic skills team member of his/her selection, schedule a meeting (one hour should do) to discuss the Basic Skills Project. Give each team member a copy of "Coming to Consensus" to prepare for the meeting.

(Duplicate)

Coming to Consensus: (To be completed individually and brought to first meeting.)

Background

1. When I say basic skills I mean _____

_____

_____

_____

2. The reason students don't learn basic skills is _____

_____

_____

_____

3. Teachers need to _____

_____

_____

_____

4. Administrators need to _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. The district needs to _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. The most pressing needs of students, teachers and the district are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

MODEL MEMO TO BASIC SKILLS TEAM

Congratulations! You have been selected to serve on the _____ basic skills team. The team consists of _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____.

Our first meeting will be:

Day: _____

Time: _____

Place: _____

Please complete the enclosed ("Coming to Consensus") sheet and bring it to the meeting. You might want to discuss the topics with some of your colleagues and include their responses.

The purpose of the meeting will be to come to a common understanding of what we mean by basic skills and to identify the most pressing needs.

I look forward to seeing you on _____.